

Kobuk

B.C. A. W.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

WASHINGTON, D. C., June 2, 1905.

Mr. C. S. Sloan,

Secretary U.S. Board on Geographic Names,

Washington, D. C.

6-30-05

Sir:

I wish to suggest for reconsideration of the Board, an Alaskan name which I believe they have heretofore had before them more than once. The Board has adopted the form Kowak for the name of a large river emptying into Hotham inlet, Kotzebue sound. I am moved to ask for reconsideration because the Alaskan contingent of the Geological Survey are very insistent that Kobuk is the local usage, and that therefore, the decision of the board should not be followed on their maps and reports. Brooks, Mendenhall, Gerdine, Reaburn, Witherspoon and Collier all tell me ^{that} not only is Kobuk the name universally used by the miners and prospectors of Alaska, but that anyone using the name Kowak would not be understood by them.

The first mention of the name in literature is by Surgeon John Simpson of H. M. S. Plover, who located the eastern mouth of the river in 1850, and wrote its name Kowuk.

The late Commander George Morse Stoney, U. S. N., who as lieutenant spent four Summers and one Winter (1883-1886) exploring this river and the neighboring country, says the native name is Kobuck, but suggests the name Putnam River in honor of Master

Charles Flint Putnam, U. S. N., ^{the} officer of the Rodgers, who was carried to sea on the ice and lost in 1880.

Lieut. Cantwell, U. S. Revenue Cutter Service, who made hasty explorations of the river in the Summers of 1883^{and} 1884, writes it Kowak, though he put Koowak on his map.

Lieut. Allen, U. S. A. in exploring the Koyukuk ~~and Yukon~~ in 1885, ^{got} ~~reported~~ the indian name of the river and wrote it variously as Holoóatna, Holoátna, Holóatná and Holooátna. He wrote the Eskimo name Kowuk but probably did not get it from the Eskimos.

Mendenhall and Reaburn made a geologic and topographic reconnaissance of the river in 1901. Mendenhall in his report, G. S. Professional Paper No. 10, p. 7, foot note, says: "This river is known as the 'Kobuk' or 'Kovuk' by the natives, prospectors, and traders. In this report the name Kowak is used in accordance with the decision of the U. S. Board on Geographic Names."

As further evidence of the local usage I note that the ^{judge of the} local court in dividing ^{his} ~~its~~ district into precincts, has established a precinct on ~~or near~~ this river which is named Kobuk precinct. This I infer from finding the name on some local maps and ⁱⁿ Alaskan newspapers.

I also send clippings from newspapers, all of them published at Nome, Alaska except ^{the} one ~~from~~ ^{from} Seattle Post Intelligencer, ~~These~~ ^{showing Kobuk to be the local usage. These} clippings belong in the files of the Division of Alaskan Mineral Resources, and I therefore must ask you to return them to me when they have served their purpose. *Returned June 30, 1905 - Ely*

The above citations and references are from reports, maps and conversation of those who have explored the river or have been on the ground. I send in addition a card on which are cited

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other ~~authorities~~ ^{Publications}, mostly taken from Mr. Baker's card, but which you will observe are compilations and not original sources of information.

Very respectfully,

Jas McCormick